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Biden sending 1,500 troops for Mexico border migrant surge

By COLLEEN LONG, AAMER MADHANI and TARA COPP
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Biden administration will send 1,500 active-duty troops to the U.S.-Mexico border starting next week, ahead of an expected migrant surge following the end of coronavirus pandemic-era restrictions. Military personnel will do data entry, warehouse support and other administrative tasks so that U.S. Customs and Border Protection can focus on fieldwork, White House spokeswoman Karine Jean-Pierre said Tuesday. The troops “will not be performing law enforcement functions or interacting with immigrants, or migrants,” Jean-Pierre said. “This will free up Border Patrol agents to perform their critical law enforcement duties.” They will be deployed for 90 days, and will be pulled from the Army and Marine Corps, and Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin will look to backfill with National Guard or Reserve troops during that period, Pentagon spokesman Air Force Brig. Gen. Pat Ryder said. There are already 2,500 National Guard members at the border.



White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre speaks during the daily briefing at the White House in Washington, Tuesday, May 2, 2023.

Associated Press

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Biden sending 1,500 troops for Mexico border migrant surge

Continued from Front

Even amid the restrictions, the administration has seen record numbers of people crossing the border, and President Joe Biden has responded by cracking down on those who cross illegally and by creating new pathways meant to offer alternatives to a dangerous and often deadly journey.

For Biden, who announced his Democratic reelection campaign a week ago, the decision signals his administration is taking seriously an effort to tamp down the number of illegal crossings, a potent source of Republican attacks, and sends a message to potential border crossers not to attempt the journey. But it also draws potentially unwelcome comparisons to Biden's Republican predecessor, whose policies Biden frequently criticized. Congress, meanwhile, has refused to take any substantial immigration-related actions.

Then-President Donald Trump deployed active-



President Joe Biden walks along a stretch of the U.S.-Mexico border in El Paso Texas, Jan. 8, 2023.

duty troops to the border to assist border patrol personnel in processing large migrant caravans, on top of National Guard forces that were already working in that capacity.

Jean-Pierre downplayed any similarity between Biden's immigration management and Trump's use

of troops during his term. "DOD personnel have been supporting CBP at the border for almost two decades now," Jean-Pierre said. "So this is a common practice."

It's another line of defense in an effort to manage overcrowding and other possible issues that might

arise as border officials move away from the COVID-19 restrictions. Last week, administration officials announced they would work to swiftly screen migrants seeking asylum at the border, quickly deport those deemed as not being qualified, and penalize people who cross illegally into the U.S. or illegally through another country on their way to the U.S. border.

They will also open centers outside the United States for people fleeing violence and poverty to apply to fly in legally and settle in the United States, Spain or Canada. The first processing centers will open in Guatemala and Colombia, with others expected to follow.

The Pentagon on Tuesday approved the request for troops by Homeland Security, which manages the border.

The deployments have a catch: As a condition for Austin's previous approval of National Guard troops to the border through Oct. 1, Homeland Security had to agree to work with the White House and Congress to develop a plan for longer-term staffing solutions and funding shortfalls, "to maintain border security and the safe, orderly, and humane processing of migrants that do not involve the continued use of DOD personnel and resources," said Pentagon spokesman Air Force Lt. Col. Devin Robinson.

As part of the agreement, the Pentagon has requested quarterly updates from Homeland Security on how it would staff its border mission without servicemembers. It was not immediately clear if those updates have happened or if border officials will be able to meet their terms of the agreement — particularly under the strain of another expected migrant surge.

Homeland Security said it was working on it. "U.S. Customs and Border Protection is investing in technology and personnel to reduce its need for DOD support in coming years, and we continue to call on Congress to support us in this task," the agency said in a statement. □

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A migrant talks with a US member of the armed forces at the US-Mexico border in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico, Sunday, April 30, 2023.

(AP Photo/Christian Chávez)

U.S. to lift most federal COVID-19 vaccine mandates next week

By **ZEKE MILLER**

AP White House Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Biden administration will end most of the last remaining federal COVID-19 vaccine requirements next week when the national public health emergency for the coronavirus ends, the White House said Monday.

Vaccine requirements for federal workers and federal contractors, as well as foreign air travelers to the U.S., will end May 11. The government is also beginning the process of lifting shot requirements for Head Start educators, health-care workers, and noncitizens at U.S. land borders.

The requirements are among the last vestiges of some of the more coercive measures taken by the federal government to promote vaccination as the deadly virus raged, and their end marks the latest display of how President Joe Biden's administration is moving to treat COVID-19 as a routine, endemic illness.

"While I believe that these vaccine mandates had a tremendous beneficial impact, we are now at a point where we think that it makes a lot of sense to pull these requirements down," White House COVID-19 coordinator Dr. Ashish Jha told The Associated Press on Monday.

Deeply polarizing at the time and the subject of numerous legal challenges many of which were successful the vaccination requirements were imposed by Biden in successive waves in late 2022 as the nation's vaccination rate plateaued even amid the emergence of new, more transmissible variants of COVID-19. More than 100 million people at one time were covered by Biden's sweeping mandates, which he announced on Sept. 9, 2021, as the delta variant of the virus was sickening more people than at any time up to that point in the pandemic. Biden



Pfizer, left, and Moderna bivalent COVID-19 vaccines are readied for use at a clinic, Nov. 17, 2022, in Richmond, Va.

Associated Press

had ruled out such requirements before taking office that January, but came to embrace them to change the behavior of what he viewed to be a stubborn slice of the public that refused to be inoculated, saying they jeopardized the lives of others and the nation's economic recovery. "We've been patient. But our patience is wearing thin, and your refusal has cost all of us," Biden said at the time. The unvaccinated minority "can cause a lot of damage, and they are." Federal courts and Congress have already rolled back Biden's vaccine requirements for large employers and military servicemembers.

Mandates remain for many employees of the National Institutes of Health, Indian Health Service and Department of Veterans Affairs which implemented their own requirements for health-care staff and others independent of the White House will remain while those agencies review their own requirements, the administration said.

Over 1.13 million people in the U.S. have died of COVID-19 since the pandemic began more than three years ago, including 1,052 people in the week ending April 26, according to the Centers for Disease Control

and Prevention. That was the lowest weekly death toll from the virus since March 2020.

"COVID continues to be a problem," Jha said. "But our healthcare system or public health resources are far more able to respond to the threat that COVID poses to our country and do so in a way that does not cause problems with access to care for Americans." He added, "Some of these emergency powers are just not necessary in the same way anymore."

More than 270 million people in the U.S., or just over 81% of the population, have received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine, according to the CDC. □

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Vermont allows out-of-staters to use assisted suicide law

By **LISA RATHKE**
Associated Press

Vermont on Tuesday became the first state in the country to change its medically assisted suicide law to allow terminally ill people from out of state to take advantage of it to end their lives.

Republican Gov. Phil Scott signed the bill that removes the residency requirement for the decades-old law.

Last year in a court settlement, Oregon agreed to stop enforcing the residency requirement of its law allowing terminally ill people to receive lethal medication. It also agreed to ask the Legislature to remove it from the law.

Before Vermont removed its residency requirement Tuesday, it had reached a settlement with a Connecticut woman who has terminal cancer to allow her to take advantage of its law, provided she complies with other aspects of it. "We are grateful to Vermont lawmakers for recognizing that a state border shouldn't determine if you die peacefully or in agony," said Kim Callinan, president and CEO of Compassion & Choices, a nonprofit advocacy organization, in a statement. "Patients routinely travel to other states



The Vermont State House stands on Feb. 14, 2023, in Montpelier, Vt.

to utilize the best health-care options. There is no rational reason they shouldn't be able to travel to another state to access medical aid in dying if the state they live in doesn't offer it." Vermont is one of 10 states that allow medically assisted suicide.

Critics of such laws say without the residency requirements states risk becoming assisted suicide tourism destinations.

Mary Hahn Beerworth, executive director of the Vermont Right to Life Commit-

tee, testified before a legislative committee in March that the practice "was, and remains, a matter of contention." "To be clear, Vermont Right to Life opposed the underlying concept behind assisted suicide and opposes the move to remove the residency requirement as there are still no safeguards that protect vulnerable patients from coercion," said Beerworth, adding she had a number of concerns including what liability Vermont could incur if the drugs failed to

end a patient's life. Supporters of Vermont's medically assisted suicide law say it has stringent safeguards, including a requirement that those who seek to use it be capable of making and communicating their health care decision to a physician. Patients are required to make two requests orally to the physician over a certain timeframe and then submit a written request that they signed in the presence of two or more witnesses who aren't interested parties.

Witnesses must sign and affirm that patients appeared to understand the nature of the document and were free from duress or undue influence at the time.

Lynda Bluestein, 75, of Bridgeport, Connecticut, and Diana Barnard, a physician from Middlebury, sued Vermont in federal court last summer, claiming its residency requirement violated the Constitution's commerce, equal protection, and privileges and immunities clauses. Barnard specializes in hospice and palliative care and has patients from neighboring New York state, which, like Connecticut, doesn't allow medically assisted suicide.

Bluestein said Tuesday that the change in Vermont means that so many other people in the Northeast can take advantage of the state's law.

"I'm thinking even more importantly that this is going to cause other states, the other jurisdictions that have medical aid in dying, to look at their residency requirement, too," she said. For Cassandra Johnston, 38, of Clifton Park, New York, the news was "such a relief." She was diagnosed with stage 3 breast cancer last year and lives a 40-minute drive from Vermont. □

Associated Press

The balloon that flew over Hawaii? U.S. says it's not China's

By **LOLITA C. BALDOR**
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The

Defense Department and the Federal Aviation Administration have been

tracking a balloon that was flying off the coast of Hawaii last week, but a defense official said Tuesday there's no indication it is connected to China or any other adversary, and it presents no threats to aviation or national security.

The balloon was first detected by radar on Friday and "Pacific Air Forces launched three F-22s to assess the situation and visually identified a spherical object," U.S. Indo-Pacific Command said. "We monitored the transit of the object and assessed that it posed no threat."

The defense official said

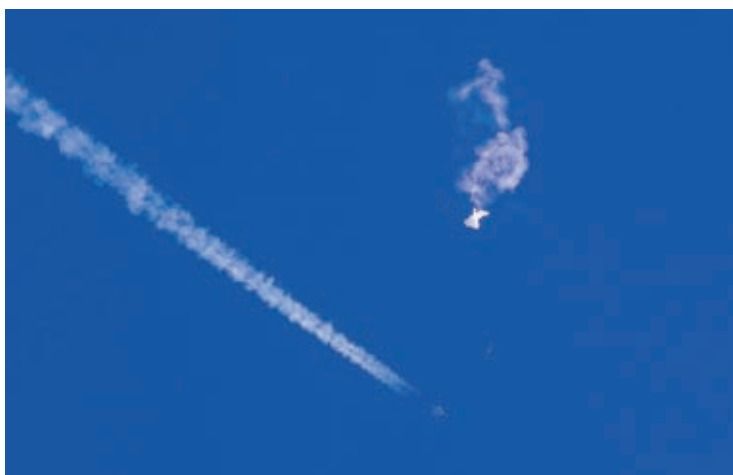
the balloon was floating at about 36,000 feet (11,000 meters), and it did not fly over any critical defense infrastructure or sensitive sites. After determining that the balloon presented no threat to people on the ground or to aviation over Hawaii, the military took no action to bring it down, said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss military operations. It's not clear who owns the balloon, which has now passed out of Hawaii's airspace, the official said.

The latest balloon sighting comes about three months after the U.S. military shot

down what officials said was a Chinese spy balloon that crossed Alaska and part of Canada before returning to the U.S. and triggering widespread interest as it flew across the country.

It was shot down over the Atlantic off the South Carolina coast on Feb. 4. Large portions of the balloon were recovered by the U.S. military.

U.S. officials said it was equipped to detect and collect intelligence signals as part of a huge, military-linked aerial surveillance program that targeted more than 40 countries. □



A fighter jet flies past the remnants of a large balloon after it was shot down above the Atlantic Ocean, just off the coast of South Carolina near Myrtle Beach, Feb. 4, 2023.

Associated Press

300 nabbed in global crackdown on dark web drug marketplace

By **MIKE CORDER** and **LINDSAY WHITEHURST**

Associated Press

THE HAGUE, Netherlands (AP) — Authorities in the U.S. and Europe arrested nearly 300 people, confiscated over \$53 million, and seized a dark web marketplace as part of an international crack down on drug trafficking that officials say was the largest operation of its kind.

The worldwide operation targeting the “Monopoly Market” is the latest major takedown of sales platforms for drugs and other illicit goods on the so-called dark web, a part of the internet hosted within an encrypted network and accessible only through specialized anonymity-providing tools.

The largest number of arrests were made in the U.S., which is in the grips of an overdose crisis. Synthetic opioids, mostly fentanyl, kill more Americans every year than died in the Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan wars combined.

“Our message to criminals on the dark web is this: You can try to hide in the furthest reaches of the internet, but the Justice Department will find you and hold



This Wednesday, Oct. 10, 2018, file photo shows the sun bouncing off the Europol headquarters in The Hague, Netherlands.

you accountable for your crimes,” said U.S. Attorney General Merrick Garland. The number of arrests and money seized was the highest for any international Justice Department-led drug trafficking operation, he said.

One defendant in California led an organization that bought fentanyl in bulk, pressed it into pills with methamphetamine and sold millions of pills to

thousands of people on the dark web, he said.

Investigators also got leads from local police investigating overdose deaths, including a 19-year-old man in Colorado who loved learning languages and building his own computers, said FBI Deputy Director Paul Abbate.

“But some of the packages his family thought were full of computer parts actually contain drugs he had

purchased off the dark net,” he said. “Because of those drugs, that promising young man sadly died of an overdose last year.”

For the first time, FBI agents from all the bureau’s field offices also visited buyers to tell them about the overdose danger of pills sold online, which are often disguised to look like prescription drugs.

The largest number of arrests 153 were made in the

Associated Press

United States, followed by the United Kingdom with 55 and Germany with 52, according to the European Union law enforcement agency Europol, which coordinated the worldwide operation.

“Our coalition of law enforcement authorities across three continents proves that we all do better when we work together,” Europol’s executive director, Catherine De Bolle, said in a statement. “This operation sends a strong message to criminals on the dark web: International law enforcement has the means and the ability to identify and hold you accountable for your illegal activities, even on the dark web.”

It seized 50.8 million euros (\$53.4 million) in cash and virtual currencies, 850 kilograms of drugs, and 117 firearms were seized in a series of raids in several countries.

In the Netherlands, where authorities arrested 10 suspects, police said the operation was made up of “separate but complementary actions that took place in nine countries over the past 18 months.” □

Australian government cracks down on smoking and vaping

CANBERRA, Australia (AP)

— Australia’s tobacco tax will be increased by billions of dollars over the next four years as the government cracks down on smoking and vaping.

Recreational vaping will be banned as the government seeks to prevent the next generation from becoming addicted to nicotine, Health Minister Mark Butler said Tuesday.

The tobacco tax would be raised by 5% a year starting from September, Butler said a total increase of 3.3 billion Australian dollars (\$2.2 billion) over four years. This follows an AU\$234-million (\$157-million) boost for tougher regulation of e-cigarettes, including new

controls on their importation and packaging.

“Vapes contain more than 200 chemicals that do not belong in the lungs. Some

of the same chemicals you will find in nail polish remover and weed killer,” Butler said.

The government will work

with the states and territories to shut down the sale of vapes in retail and convenience stores and make it easier to get a prescription for therapeutic use.

To tackle the growing black market, the government will increase the product standards for vapes, including by restricting flavors and colors. It will require pharmaceutical-like packaging, a reduction in the maximum allowed nicotine concentrations and volumes and a ban on single-use vapes.

“This is a product targeted at our kids,” Butler said. “Vaping has become the No. 1 behavioral issue in high schools, and it’s becoming widespread in

primary schools. This must end.”

Butler said the hard-won gains in public health relating to the reduction in smoking could be undone by the “new threat.”

Steve Robson, president of the Australian Medical Association, the nation’s leading doctors group, backed the move.

“We know the new young generation of Australians are being hooked on vapes and this is a great initiative,” he said.

Alcohol and Drug Foundation CEO Erin Lalor said most people vaping in Australia were using unregulated products, with no idea what was in them. □



A person poses for a photograph as they vape in Melbourne, March 23, 2023. A person poses for a photograph as they vape in Melbourne, March 23, 2023.

Associated Press

Russian defense chief wants wartime missile output doubled

By **DAVID RISING**
Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russia's defense chief on Tuesday urged a state company to double its missile output, as a possible Ukrainian counteroffensive looms and both sides in the 14-month war reportedly experience an ammunition crunch.

Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu, speaking at a meeting with top military brass, said the state-owned Tactical Missiles Corporation had been fulfilling its contracts in a timely manner. But, Shoigu added, "right now it is necessary to double the production of high-precision weapons in the shortest possible time." Analysts have been trying to figure out whether Russia is running low on high-precision ammunition, as its missile barrages against Ukraine have become less frequent and smaller in scale.

The U.K. Defense Ministry noted in a Tuesday assessment that "logistics problems remain at the heart of Russia's struggling campaign in Ukraine."

"Russia does not have enough munitions to achieve success on the offensive," it said.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov on Tuesday de-



A Ukrainian army sniper looks on near Bakhmut, Donetsk region, Ukraine, Tuesday, May 2, 2023.
Associated Press

scribed Washington's latest estimate of Russia's losses in Ukraine as "spun out of thin air." The White House said Monday it now estimated that Russia had suffered 100,000 casualties just since December, including more than 20,000 killed, as Ukraine rebuffed a heavy assault by Russian forces in eastern Ukraine.

White House National Security Council spokesman John Kirby said the U.S. estimate was based on newly declassified American intelligence. He did not explain

how the intelligence community derived the number. "Washington doesn't have the opportunity to give any correct numbers. They don't have such data," Peskov said.

Later Tuesday, the Ukrainian military reported that Russian forces launched 30 airstrikes, three missile strikes and eight attacks from multiple rocket launchers, resulting in casualties among the civilian population and damage to civilian infrastructure. The General Staff of Ukraine's armed forces

said Russia was continuing to concentrate its efforts on offensive operations in Ukraine's industrial east, focusing attacks around Lyman, Bakhmut, Avdiivka and Marinka in the country's Donetsk province.

The prosecutor's office in Ukraine's southern Kherson province reported that Russian shelling in the regional capital, also called Kherson, and several villages killed three people and wounded five.

Ukrainian forces, meanwhile, say they are ready-

ing their own counteroffensive and stockpiling ammunition to sustain it along potentially long supply lines.

Ukrainian Defense Minister Oleksiy Reznikov said Monday that the "key things" for the assault's success were "the availability of weapons, prepared, trained people, our defenders and defenders who know their plan at their level, as well as providing this offensive with all the necessary things shells, ammunition, fuel, protection, etc."

"As of today, we are entering the home stretch, when we can say: 'Yes, everything is ready,'" Reznikov said in televised comments. In Russia's Bryansk region, which borders northern Ukraine, an "unidentified explosive device" derailed a freight train, Gov. Alexander Bogomaz said Tuesday evening.

Russian Railways confirmed that "illegal interference" caused 20 cars of the freight train to derail. No casualties were reported.

An explosive device also derailed a freight train in Bryansk on Monday. There were no immediate indications who set off the explosives, but Bryansk has received sporadic cross-border shelling during the war. □

Bolivian Jesuits apologize for alleged abuse by late priest

Associated Press

LA PAZ, Bolivia (AP) — Bolivia's Jesuit congregation apologized Tuesday and

announced an investigation into a late Spanish priest who allegedly abused several minors in Bolivia dating

back to the 1980s.

"We apologize for the pain this has caused," said the Rev. Bernardo Mercado, head of the Catholic religious order known as La Compañía de Jesús. He said the congregation has launched a probe that seeks to bring justice for the victims and called the situation an "embarrassment." The case of Jesuit priest Alfonso Pedrajas Moreno came to light over the weekend in a report by the Spanish newspaper El País. It published excerpts of the priest's diary, where he allegedly admitted to having abused at least 85 children while he was a teacher in Bolivia until 2009 when he

died.

Bolivian officials have not released the number of victims nor the dates in which the alleged abuse took place. But earlier this week Bolivia's top prosecutor Wilfredo Chávez said on Twitter that he would seek information from the Spanish consulate on the case, so it can be investigated in Bolivia.

The congregation is investigating two cases, one which concluded in April and determined the "veracity" of that allegation, and a second one which is ongoing.

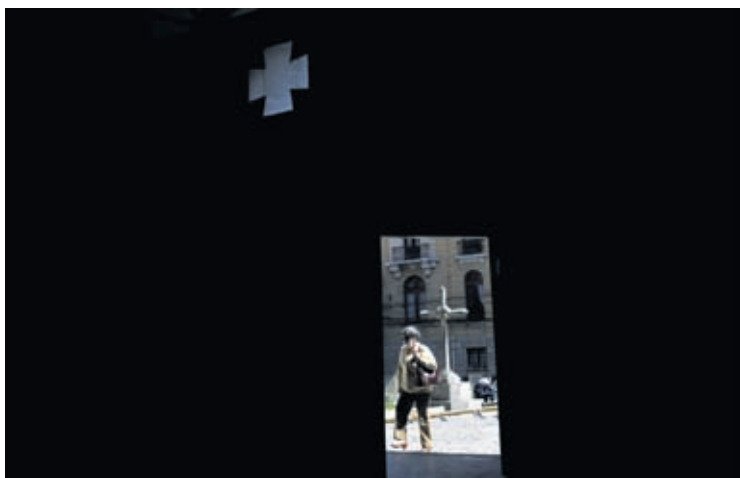
Audalia Zurita, a lawyer for the Jesuit congregation, said Tuesday at a press

conference that they have asked El País for a copy of Pedrajas Moreno's diary, and that all information gathered in their probe will be shared with the Attorney General's Office.

This is not the first complaint against priests for abusing minors in Bolivia, but few cases have been thoroughly investigated and brought to justice.

In 2015, a rural priest was sentenced to 15 years in prison for the abuse of 12 minors.

A short time later he committed suicide in jail. In 2009 a priest was sentenced to 22 years in prison for similar crimes. □



A woman, framed by a doorway of the Merced Catholic Church, walks past in La Paz, Bolivia, Tuesday, May 2, 2023.
Associated Press



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Minister Ursell Arends implements Aruparking again starting May 2nd, 2023

As the minister of Transport, Mr. Ursell Arends, has already indicated in an earlier press conference, Aruparking will be implemented once again starting from May 2nd of this year. This time, however, there will be a slight change in the parking system in the down town Oranjestad area, especially in the city center.

During the press conference, which took place in April, Minister Arends confirmed that Aruparking would be reintroduced in the month of May: "the goal is to reinstate Aruparking this coming May. There is still some final details that need to be finalized, but we are very close to reactivating Aruparking in the down town area," he stated at that time.

Besides that, he added that there will be more parking spaces in the city center and at the same time, he announced that all yellow parking spaces—which usually was meant for private parking—will now be open to the public: "That would also bring a huge relief to our community," he remarked.

On the official Facebook page of Aruparking, a video was posted in which the institution had indicated that starting May 2nd, Aruparking will indeed be reactivated. The concept, according to the video, includes paying two Aruban florins to park everywhere that is marked. This small sum can be paid cash at the parking meters or online through pay.aw.

In terms of the parking meters of Aruparking, our reporter had previously asked the minister back in March about the meters that are currently out of order. At that time, the minister replied: "Aruparking is currently in the process of making these parking meters operational again."

Our reporter also asked him if there will be new meters placed in parking zones or if the old ones will all be fixed. To this, the minister replied: "There will be functioning meters in all parking zones, whether it be new ones or the ones that are already there," he explained.



LOCAL



For the 20th straight year at Playa Linda Beach Resort Seeds for healthy lifestyles are planted during Green Week

PALM BEACH – Goals of a healthy future for the Playa Linda Beach Resort as well as its employees once again received emphasis during Green Week. For the 20th consecutive year, the resort recently organized an annual, week-long program of activities and lectures intended to involve employees and educate on best practices for real life improvements.

Participation was high among all resort departments, and everyone proved motivated to make use of teambuilding activities. Organized lectures offered valuable information provided by varied speakers including Dr. John Croes who spoke on general health and how to take control of one's own wellbeing, speakers from EndTime, a representative



from Kok Optica who emphasized the importance of taking care of one's vision and also, trailblazer Lily Prins, from Wilhelmina Kankerfonds (WKF), who spoke about cancer prevention, in particular of breast cancer and prostate cancer. Lilly Prins, a pioneer in raising awareness and of dispelling taboos, continues to promote the importance of being proactive by scheduling regu-

lar check-ups and acting before symptoms appear.

Many of the speakers spoke to specific Aruba circumstances, such as in taking advantage of the good weather and access to the sea in seeking to exercise as well as using measures that protect eyes and skin from the powerful sun, but also of the universals in finding balance between work life and home life.



Playa Linda has a long history with seeking better ways to create healthier environments for its guests as well as its employees. The resort early on sought environmental certification and was the first hotel in Palm Beach to implement ISO-14001, and continues to meet ongoing, environmental management standards. Green Week provides another opportunity for the resort in promoting a healthy work environment as well as in fostering a supportive network among employees.

tations and emphasized the central goal behind team efforts as seeking a holistic approach that goes beyond clean-ups and recycling efforts, and show how interrelated we are to each other as well as our environment. "We have the power to create a more healthy, sustainable environment for ourselves for long term goals. The investment in green efforts and healthy attitudes come back to us ten fold," she concludes.

Nigy spoke again at this year's Green Week presen-

Spearheading efforts and organizing another informative Green Week is the Resort's Green Team, headed by Housekeeping Assistant Manager Nigaima 'Nigy' Ascencion. "Green Week was a total success, well attended and with a lot of questions asked by employees," she remarks. "We always choose topical subjects which are relevant to our community."



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Aruba Tourism Authority honored loyal visitors at Manchebo Beach Resort & Spa

The Aruba Tourism Authority recently had the great pleasure to recognize Distinguished Visitors and Goodwill Ambassadors of Aruba. These visitors were respectively honored with certificates acknowledging their years of visits, loyalty, and love to the island of Aruba.

The honor certification is presented on behalf of the Minister of Tourism as a token of appreciation and to say "Masha Danki" to guests whom have visited Aruba 10, 20, or 35 years or more consecutively.

The three honoring levels are as follows:

Distinguished Visitor (10>years consecutively visiting Aruba)	Goodwill Ambassador (20>years consecutively visiting Aruba)	Emerald Ambassador (35>years consecutively visiting Aruba)
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The honorees were:

Distinguished Visitors of Aruba

Mr. Michael & Mrs. Katherine Webb from North Carolina, United States.

Goodwill Ambassadors of Aruba

Mr. Herb & Mrs. Sue Montgomery from Massachusetts, United States.

Ms. Kimberley Richardson representing the Aruba Tourism Authority, and staff members of the Man-

chebo Beach Resort & Spa bestowed the certifications to the honorees, presented them with memorable gifts, and also thanked them for choosing Aruba as their best-loved vacation destination and as their home-away-from-home.

On behalf of the Aruba Tourism Authority, we would like to express our sincere gratitude and appreciation to both Mr. & Mrs. Webb and Mr. & Mrs. Montgomery for their continued visits to the "One Happy Island". We are thankful to have such wonderful visitors after all these years!

Top reasons for returning to Aruba provided by the Webb's were:

Aruba's exceptional Beauty
Aruba's friendly, kind, & happy people
Sun, Sand, & Sea
Easy of moving around the island
Safety & Cleanliness of the island

Top reasons for returning to Aruba provided by the Montgomery's were:

Aruba's nice sandy beaches
Aruba's warm consistent weather all year round
Aruba's variety of foods
The wonderful, attentive, and friendly staff members at the resort
The variety of activities at the resort – Pega Pega Beach Bar





Aruba Today is delighted to share to its readers a new segment called "Beauty and the Beach", where we take a minute to honor our guests who have decided to spend their vacation on our beautiful and warm island.

In this edition, we'd like to give a shout out to Nick and Sami from New York. They have been here five times and they love said they love everything! Aruba is always proud to host all families and guests. We at Aruba Today encourage any visitor of the island to send in their pictures and/or messages; who knows? You might get on the cover!

This segment is sponsored by Alhambra Casino and Shops.





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Article by Etnia Nativa

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Staged Giant Boulders

Stay in touch with the revelations of "Island-Insights" about the ethnic heritage of the island, which in each weekly episode defends the real identity of our beloved rock called Aruba.

The values of the destination, native heritage, and cultural authenticity are present in this cultural blog as a way to safeguard more reasons to fall in love with Aruba.

"Island-Insight" shares awareness, educates, and safeguards native heritage by encouraging the reader to experience an islander's state of mind.

Education breaks down the barriers to greater human understanding, empathy, and empowerment.

where they are located is not considered a distinct area unless it covers 40 square miles.

Aruba has three basic geological formations: a limestone part, an undulating part, and the central mountainous part, where the highest elevations of the island are found, including the highest, known as Yamanota 189 m, and the other hills, such as Arikok 184 m.

The limestone part embraces two other zones of the island forming the coastline: some small ancient islands as coral plateaus and canyons of dry rivers.

Some formations that will surely capture your attention will be the rock forma-



The physical characteristics of these large boulders allowed our ancestors to use them as shelters and religious centers, using the smaller rocks as natural water containers and Metate's to grind all types of cereals and materials for daily use.

The hardness and homogeneous structure of the rock made it the best raw material available for these artifacts.

Aruba's Indigenous Cultural Heritage is meticulously researched, documented, presented, and preserved by Etnia Nativa and associates.

An exclusive collection is part of its private museum on permanent display. Many of the objects and items in the collection come from salvage activities and cover an era beginning approximately 4,500 years ago and ending in 1880.

Are you intrigued by the origins and cultural heritage of Aruba?

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be moved by the island's authentic heritage and experience exhibits of archaeological artifacts, works of art, archaic and lithic artifacts, prehistoric tools, unique artifacts, and colonial furniture.

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He provides visitors an authentic glimpse of Aruba inside his exclusive museum that recreates and introduces you to an

authentic glimpse into the island's cultural legacy.

The colonial family heritage of our columnist, an islander "Piache", dates back to 1640, when the Dutch occupation began.

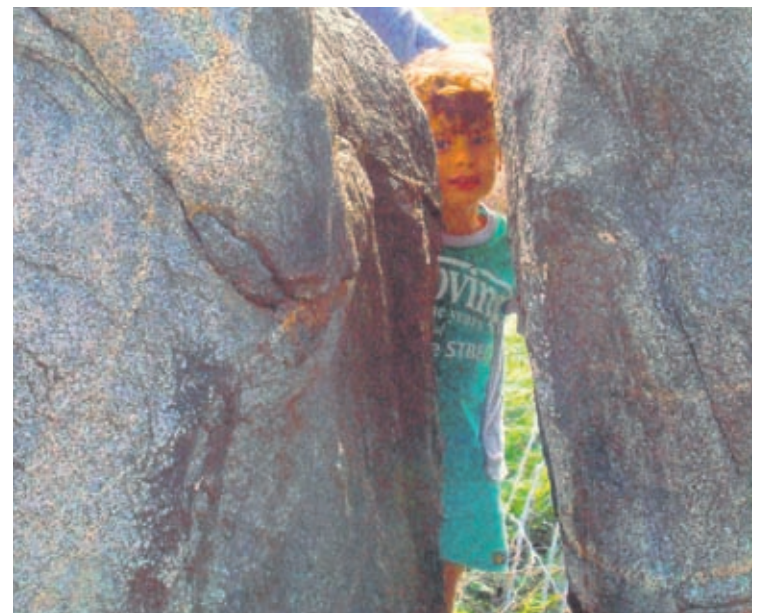
Meet him and enjoy a genuine native encounter, given that Etnia Nativa comes to mind when an authentic destination experience is requested.

Appointment is required + 297 592 2702 or etniana-tiva03@gmail.com



So today we want to keep you informed about one of the wonderful parts of Aruba's landscape, "the batholith boulders."

tions made out of staked boulders recurring throughout the island's landscape, especially when you tour through the Santa Cruz district.



Aymar Torres, a happy musician “because I do what I love”

ORANJESTAD – He is an Aruban musician living in the Netherlands, and when he gets on stage, he shows the Latin blood inside him, delighting the audience with catchy songs from different countries like Brazil, Colombia, Venezuela and the Caribbean.

In an interview with our reporter, Aymar says that he chose Latin rhythms because in the Netherlands there are not many artists performing the music from the old days, like Bolero or Trio Los Panchos. For this reason he decided to do this, since he sings in different languages like Spanish, Portuguese, French and Italian. “This way people get more of the feeling that they are in the past and in their country as well,” he says.

In one word, he describes himself as “happy, because I do what I love. I let people live their lives and I don’t live with envy.”

He has been living in the Netherlands for 16 years already, and he dedicates his time to his six-month old baby, his partner who will soon become his wife, his music lessons three times a week, and his shows.

Manuel is their first child. He says that together with his partner they are learning a lot from him. Torres himself is “attending father school”, and every day he makes sure to dedicate a lot of time to his child and playing music for him, since the first years are very important for a child’s development.



Torres mentions that since he was very young he decided to sing. He was a fan of Shakira and liked watching television, there was a show on a Venezuelan TV channel called “Club de los Tigritos”, which was very famous among children and teenagers in the 90s for the series of Salsorin. “I grew up with all those artists and I wanted to become a singer like them. Then I learned singing when I was 16, and took it more seriously and continued improving myself.”

Regarding the difference between performing in the Netherlands or Aruba, Torres explains that there is no difference, since “I am always myself as an artist. It doesn’t matter what country you go, you stay yourself and with the show you created, if you change something it’s going to feel weird. What I do change is my repertoire [when I’m in Aruba], because I know that many in Aruba do know the songs. Like when I play Juan Luis Guerra, there are other artists who also play Juan Luis Guerra, so I try playing a different song than what you already hear in Aruba.”

But the audience in Aruba is different, more difficult compared to the Dutch, because they know the music already. “If I play songs other than what they are used to, they enjoy, but in the Netherlands I can play more music that is played here,” he says.

Aruba has a lot of talent in the cultural, creative and artistic industry, but sometimes do not receive enough support from our own community. Aymar commented: “People need to take musicians and artists in general seriously. Some of them are not doing this job as a hobby but they live from it. Also the government can help see the musicians and artists more like a real worker, a public servant, because they are also important for our tourism. It would be good if we mix the artists with tourism so that the tourists have more to enjoy.”

Aymar also points out that some people question the work of a musician. “There are still people with the belief that music is a hobby, but if

you give people a chance to see it more like a job, more people in Aruba will improve in music, there will be better musicians that can perform abroad and living in Aruba. This is true for all artists, like painters, artisans, fashion designers, among others.”

Aymar also says that he is a fan of many artists, local and international, and here he announced that he wants to collaborate with beloved Aruban singer, Edjean Semeleer. He is planning and is busy with something to sing with him. “But since I had my son, I took a pause from writing and composing songs. This year I will start again with my own songs.”



Finalizing, he leaves as a message for people to support the youth in music and art of any category. “Push those who do want to go into music, help them and stop seeing music as just a hobby,” he says.

For more information, you can find Aymar on social media as “Aymar Music.”

Images are courtesy of Aymar himself.

CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS 39 Indy
1 Golf goals entrant
5 Yellow- 40 Frees (of)
stone animal
41 Garden sections

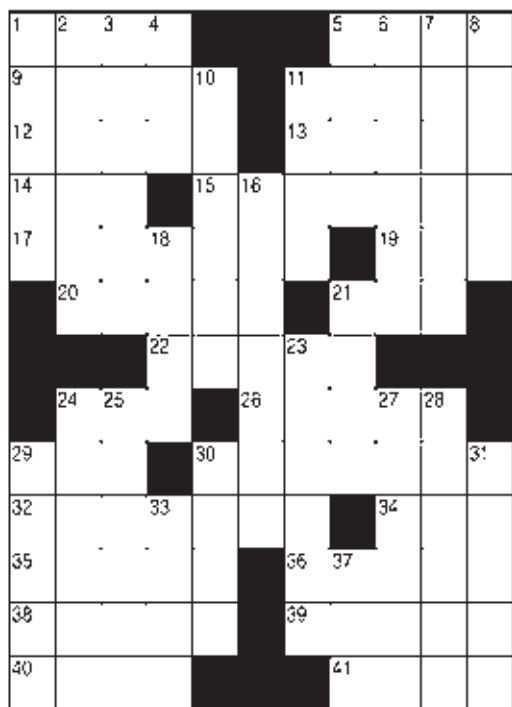
9 Steer clear of
11 Doctor's reading
12 Island off Naples
13 Happened
14 Even score
15 Sent
17 Lost one's footing
19 Scrollwork shape
20 Conde- scending look
21 TV spots
22 Shiny finish
24 Sit-up targets
26 Bridge utterance
29 In the style of
30 Cut off
32 Passed over
34 "The Last Jedi" role
35 Shire of "Rocky"
36 Steer clear of
38 Vote in

DOWN
1 Accords
2 Uses
3 Entice
4 Knight's title
5 Post-dinner sound
6 Wed in secret
7 Evaluate
8 Marsh plants
10 Put to rest
11 Bill stamp

A	W	A	I	T	S	M	A	Z	E
B	O	R	N	E	O	A	L	A	S
C	O	M	E	T	O	G	R	I	P
V	O	T	E	S					
A	M	E	N	T	H	A	W		
S	T	I	R		S	T	Y	L	E
P	O	X		B	O	O		L	E
A	M	U	S	E	D		L	O	D
S	P	A	R		B	E	T	S	
F	E	T	E	S					
C	O	M	E	T	O	B	L	O	W
A	L	O	T		N	O	I	D	E
D	E	W	Y		S	P	E	E	D

Yesterday's answer

16 Jane Eyre, 27 Evergreen
for one tree
18 Cribbage 28 Like
markers ranked
21 Memo players
letters 29 Fall
23 Web flower
spinner 30 Petty fight
24 Acid's 31 Textile
opposite workers
25 Dealt with 33 Photos
a leak, 37 Chemist's
maybe place



A X Y D L B A X R
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

5-3 CRYPTOQUOTE

Q K I K I A K Q N G J N Z B H Z J B L Y Y H

Z T J T P Q K J N J T Z N Z T

A K U J D T K Y L Z N T I P Z U J O D T K Y L

T S Z U K T. — I J H G D Q R J L L Q K F

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: ANYTHING MADE WITH LOVE. BAM! — IT'S A BEAUTIFUL MEAL. — EMERIL LAGASSE

Liz Weston: Audit your credit cards for greater savings

Credit card rewards help our family save money on groceries, gas and other necessities. We also use rewards for airline tickets, hotel rooms and airport lounge access.

We're in good company. Most Americans have at least one rewards card, and nearly half of rewards cardholders are using their perks to help offset rising inflation, according to a 2022 Wells Fargo survey. But a recent review of our cards revealed that some are no longer worth their annual fees or have been eclipsed by better offerings.

Credit card fees, reward rates and benefits change all the time.

So do the ways we spend our money, which means a card that used to be a good fit may no longer work as well. Given all that, it's not surprising that fewer than one-third of credit card users feel that they're making the most of their rewards cards, according to J.D. Power's 2022 U.S. Credit Card Satisfaction Study. An annual review of our credit cards helps ensure we're getting properly rewarded.

CREATE A REWARDS TRACKER

First, a few caveats. Rewards credit cards make sense for our family because we pay balances in full every month. If we didn't, the cost of interest would more than offset the value of any rewards. Also, you don't need to be as obsessed with rewards as we are to benefit. A simple cash-back rewards card can save you money with-



This Nov. 18, 2009, file photo, shows credit and bank cards with electronic chips in Gelsenkirchen, Germany.

Associated Press

out a lot of hassle.

Once we had a few cards, though, I found it helpful to start using a spreadsheet to keep track of each card's annual fee, renewal date, "earn rate" (such as 6% cash back on groceries, or 3 points per dollar spent on flights) and other relevant benefits.

Every year or so, I update this spreadsheet with the value of rewards we've earned and redeemed as well as current information about annual fees and benefits. If I've used points to book a flight or cashed in a free hotel night certificate, for example, I'll include the value of the travel. With cash back cards, I type in the dollar value redeemed during the year. Some cards provide a helpful year-end summary; otherwise, I can check rewards activity month by month by logging into the account online.

INVESTIGATE CARD BENEFITS

Investigating all of a card's

perks may require logging into your account with a web browser rather than a mobile app, since account information is often more detailed using a browser. There's typically a tab or link that leads you to a rewards dashboard that summarizes your earn rate and highlights any additional benefits, such as complimentary food delivery subscriptions or credits that cover airline fees or offset the cost of streaming services. I add the dollar totals for benefits I've used to the spreadsheet and make a note on my calendar to use up any remaining credits before the perk resets. (Many credits must be used within a calendar year, but some reset on the card's anniversary date.) I also note other benefits that don't necessarily have a price tag but still have significant value, such as travel insurance, elite status perks at a hotel chain or airline, or extended warranties on purchases. □

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A Small Light' focuses on those who helped Anne Frank

'By MARK KENNEDY

AP Entertainment Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Liev Schreiber was visiting conflict-ravaged Ukraine when he got a script about real-life events some 80 years ago that felt strangely timely. It was a story set during the 1942 occupation of the Netherlands by the Nazis and the way some Dutch risked their lives to save Jews from the Holocaust. Celebrated diarist Anne Frank is in it, but she's almost peripheral. Instead, National Geographic's "A Small Light" focuses on a young, newly married woman who helped hide Frank and who provided food and other necessities at great risk. The series streams on Disney+ on May 1 and on Hulu the following day.

"The central storyline being about this young woman coming of age and dealing with her marriage gives you this incredibly intimate perspective on what it's like to have one's life interrupted by an invasion," Schreiber said. "It felt so resonant to me."

"A Small Light" stars Bel Powley as Miep Gies, a re-



This image released by National Geographic for Disney shows Liev Schreiber as Otto Frank, left, and Bel Powley as Miep Gies in a scene from "A Small Light."

Associated Press

al-life heroine for protecting eight people in a secret annex in Amsterdam where Frank would write her famous diary. Schreiber plays Anne's father, Otto Frank.

In addition to an important historical story, the series is also an examination of how far strangers can go to help someone in trou-

ble. Gies, who wasn't Jewish, faced certain death if discovered.

"There's no point in retelling a story about this part of history that everyone knows so well if we're just going to be bashed over the head by the same historical facts we already know," said Powley. "It needs to make people feel

'What would I do and what should I do?' Because the situation right now isn't that different."

Viewers first meet Gies as an aimless party girl who is transformed into a resistance fighter after the Nazis invade. She bluffs her way past army checkpoints and gathers scarce food for the hidden. She tells one of the people she saves: "If you need to cry, cry now."

Gies was the secretary of Otto Frank, and her fierce altruistic side put her marriage in jeopardy. In one argument scene, she tells her husband: "It's the right thing to do and I've agreed to do it, and I didn't think I had to consult you before deciding to save a person's life."

"She was unwavering in her sense of what the right thing to do was," said Powley. "She didn't hesitate, and she also was incredibly confident and vivacious and vibrant and alive. I always imagined her with this huge smile on her face all of the time."

Schreiber, who has spoken up about the Ukrainian invasion in part because he has grandparents from there, said Gies' bravery was underlined by the fact that she had no blood

connection to the people she was helping.

"The reality of the situation is that we should all care about what's happening in Eastern Europe or for that matter, what's happening in Sudan or Turkey or whatever," he said. "I felt like there's something about Miep that really represents the best in each of us, those of us that say yes to each other. I felt like it was a great time to tell that story."

After the Nazi invasion of the Netherlands in July 1942, the Frank family went into hiding. The Van Pels family followed a week later. Four months later, they were joined by an eighth person: Fritz Pfeffer, a dentist and acquaintance of the Frank family. The group was discovered in 1944 and sent to the Auschwitz concentration and extermination camp.

"A Small Light" shows the humanity of each member of the group, from Anne's rebelliousness to the needling of family members and the discomforts of life in hiding. There are fights and whining and stubbornness.

"Not many of us are familiar with rockets hitting our homes," said Schreiber. "But we can relate to a relationship that's not going well. We can relate to an interrupted meal. We can relate to these things that were happening to these people's lives as the rockets started to fall. And that brings us into the story in a unique way."

The series comes during a new spasm of antisemitism in America, with the number of anti-Jewish incidents increasing by more than 35% in the past year, from 2,721 in 2021 to 3,697 in 2022.

Schreiber sees the numbers with alarm, having just completed a series about the Holocaust. "The patterns are the same misinformation, disinformation, scapegoats," he said. "Unfortunately, we are seeing them in the U.S. again." □

New Michael Cunningham novel 'Day' scheduled for January

NEW YORK (AP) — The next novel from Pulitzer Prize winner Michael Cunningham, his first in a decade, is a family saga set in New York City before and during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Random House announced Monday that "Day" will be published in January. The novel takes place on three separate days in April, one each in the years 2019-2021.

"I've definitely had moments over the last 10 years when I thought, well, if the world is in this kind of shape, who needs a novel?" Cunningham said in a statement. "But maybe it's during hard times that the

world needs novels more than ever."



This cover image released by Random House shows "Day" by Michael Cunningham.

Associated Press

The author calls the new book "a story about people dealing with something terrible, and it's about survival, but more centrally it's a story about love. I'm deeply interested in love a sense of happiness, of living the life that one has hoped to live. And love is most interesting when it has survived terrible tests." Cunningham's previous novels, published by Farrar, Straus & Giroux, include "Specimen Days," "By Nightfall" and "The Hours," which won the Pulitzer for fiction in 1999 and was adapted into an Oscar winning movie of the same name. □

Once No. 12, Berger starting over after back issues

By **DOUG FERGUSON**
AP Golf Writer

Daniel Berger spent the afternoon on his boat in calm Florida waters, an ideal location for anyone except a guy who misses green turf under his feet and a golf club in his hand. Tuesday marked the 319th day since Berger shot 75 in the second round of the U.S. Open at Brookline in June to miss the cut by two shots. That was his last tournament. He's still not sure when the next one will be. Pain in his lower back, which first surfaced after a long post-Ryder Cup break in 2021, reached a point where he needed ice baths before he could play. It hurt just to sit in the car on the way to the course.

Relief, finally, is on the way, thanks in part to a tip from Luke Donald.

"That was the worst six months of my life," Berger said Monday evening. "I've had a pretty easy life. I play golf for a living it's not that stressful. But there was a point that I would have given up golf for the rest of my life not to feel like that." Berger turned 30 a month ago with little



Team USA's Brooks Koepka, left, and Daniel Berger celebrate on the 11th hole during a foursome match at the Ryder Cup at Whistling Straits Golf Course Friday, Sept. 24, 2021, in Sheboygan, Wis. Associated Press

fanfare because he has become a forgotten figure. Golf can be a lonely sport when the game is not going well. It's even lonelier when you're not playing at all. His only real contact with the PGA Tour was Commissioner Jay Monahan calling a few times to check on him.

Berger, full of energy and self-belief, won the last hole of the last singles

match at Whistling Straits to beat Matt Fitzpatrick and make the Americans the first team to register 19 points against Europe. Emotionally and physically drained, he took off the rest of 2021 except for an appearance in the Bahamas in December. When he showed up for the Sentry Tournament of Champions, something didn't feel right with his back.

"I didn't do as much as I should have in terms of conditioning and working out, and when I showed up in Hawaii my back was bothering me," Berger said. "I've never had a back problem in my life." He shot 25-under par to tie for fifth at Kapalua, then took two weeks off. That didn't help. His back felt just as bad at Torrey Pines. It reached a point where

he withdrew from his title defense at Pebble Beach and skipped the rest of the West Coast.

And then at the Honda Classic, he lost a five-shot lead in the final round.

"In retrospect, that was the wrong decision. I kept playing through it," Berger said. "It got to the point right around Augusta where I couldn't sit down, I couldn't do normal activities, I couldn't play tennis. I need to see someone about it."

The MRI came back clean. The pain stayed. He could swing, so he played. Such is stubborn side of Berger, the son of Davis Cup player and renowned tennis coach Jay Berger. When he got to the Memorial in early June, he said it hurt just sitting in the car.

"I played that tournament (he tied for fifth) and told myself, 'This is it.' And then I tried to play the U.S. Open," Berger said. "I was taking two ice baths a day to get on the course."

When he finally stepped away from golf, it only got worse not so much increased pain but the uncertainty. No one could figure out what was wrong. □

Djokovic can return to U.S. Open; vaccine mandate ends May 11

By **HOWARD FENDRICH**
AP Tennis Writer

Novak Djokovic can return to the U.S. Open this year after missing the tournament in 2022, because the federal government's COVID-19 vaccination mandate for foreign air travelers ends next week.

"Novak Djokovic is a great champion, a fan favorite, and now that the federal government has lifted its vaccine requirements for international travelers, we look forward to welcoming him back to New York for the 2023 U.S. Open," U.S. Tennis Association spokesman Chris Widmaier wrote in an email to The Associated Press on Tuesday. The White House an-

nounced Monday most of the last remaining federal COVID-19 vaccine requirements will disappear May 11, when the national pub-

lic health emergency for the coronavirus ends.

The U.S. Open, the season's final Grand Slam tournament, begins in New York in



Novak Djokovic, of Serbia, returns a shot to Alexander Zverev, of Germany, during the semifinals of the U.S. Open tennis championships, Friday, Sept. 10, 2021, in New York. Associated Press

August.

Djokovic, a 35-year-old from Serbia, has missed several key events including the 2022 U.S. Open because he decided not to get inoculated against the coronavirus.

Back in April 2020, Djokovic said he was opposed to needing to be vaccinated to travel. He later said he would not get the shots even if it meant he would not be allowed to participate in some of his sport's most important tournaments. Unable to travel to the United States, he missed the Masters 1000 tournaments at Indian Wells, California, and Miami both last year and this year.

Most famously, Djokovic

was deported from Australia in January 2022 ahead of the Australian Open after a legal saga that resulted in the revocation of his visa to travel there.

Djokovic was able to go to that country this January after its pandemic-era restrictions were eased. There, he won the Australian Open for his 22nd Grand Slam title, pulling even with rival Rafael Nadal for the most by a man in tennis history. Djokovic is sitting out the Madrid Open this week because of a lingering issue with his surgically repaired right elbow.

The next major tennis championship is the French Open, which begins in Paris on May 28. □

Canelo Álvarez returning home to Guadalajara to fight Ryder

By **CARLOS RODRIGUEZ**

Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Fighting in his native Guadalajara for the first time in 12 years has presented some different challenges for Saúl Álvarez, like finding out just how many tickets he needs to accommodate family and friends.

"Canelo" Álvarez is one of the best boxers in the world and he will return home on Saturday to face British rival John Ryder at the Akron Stadium in the western Mexican city. He hasn't fought in Guadalajara since June 2011, when he defeated British fighter Ryan Rhodes.

Back then, Álvarez's career was on the rise. In March of that year, he won his first world title, the World Boxing Council welterweight belt. Now he comes home as a more mature boxer who has already won world titles in four different weights classes and was the unified champion at three of those. That's why it shouldn't be surprising that the bout at the Akron Stadium sold out in a matter of hours, leaving "Canelo" with the prospect of both preparing himself for the fight and attending to his family's ticket requests.

"It's crazy. It's a difficult part, let me tell you, because ev-



Saul "Canelo" Alvarez jumps rope during a training session at a gym in Guadalajara, Mexico, on April 17, 2023.

Associated Press

everyone wants to go. They're all from here (Guadalajara)," the 32-year-old Álvarez said in an interview with The Associated Press. "It's complicated, but you try to do everything you can and have as many as you can." Álvarez has three brothers, all of them were fighters, and a sister.

In addition to the ticket requests, Álvarez has had to adjust to Guadalajara's altitude of 1,566 meters above sea level as opposed to San Diego, California, where he usually prepares for other

fights at an altitude of only 19 meters. "It has been different especially because of the altitude because we had to adapt to the routine in Guadalajara, but so far everything is going very well as always you have to try to do everything 100% despite the circumstances," Álvarez said.

One unknown ahead of Saturday's fight is how well Álvarez will respond to the surgery on his left wrist that he underwent after closing the trilogy against Genady Golovkin last Septem-

ber.

"I feel very good, the preparation has been excellent, and I am now ready to train at 100%. That makes me more motivated to train hard in Guadalajara," Álvarez said.

Leading up to the fight, Álvarez has also had to deal with criticism because he chose to fight at home, including a strong jibe from former world champion Juan Manuel Márquez, who considers Ryder a "regular fighter, from medium level to below."

The 35-year-old Ryder holds the interim World Boxing Organization super middleweight belt, which he won in November by beating Zach Parker.

"All of that is part of this. There was always criticism in the past and there continues to be criticism," Álvarez said. "It has always been a split between the 'haters' and those who support me, which fortunately there are more."

After the Ryder fight, Álvarez will have a decision to make for his next fight, probably set for September. Many fans and commentators, including Márquez, want him to fight David Benavidez, but Álvarez will probably go for a rematch against Dmitry Bivol. Although his career polarizes opinions in his country despite his achievements, Álvarez is revered by the majority in Guadalajara.

"The phenomenon of Canelo Álvarez is incredible. I had never seen anything like it, someone who has so many detractors when all he does is getting victory after victory," said Mauricio Sulaiman, the WBC president. "After losing to (Floyd) Mayweather he could have fallen, but he matured, he had the strength to come back and conquer the world." □

PSG suspends Messi for unapproved trip to Saudi Arabia

By **KEN MAGUIRE**

AP Sports Writer

Lionel Messi was suspended by Paris Saint-Germain for taking a trip to Saudi Arabia without the club's permission, a person with knowledge of the situation told The Associated Press on Tuesday.

The person would not specify the length of the suspension, though French media reported it to be two weeks. The person spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to publicly discuss the matter. A two-week suspension

would mean Messi would miss PSG's next two games. L'Equipe and RMC Sport both reported the suspension without citing sources. The person told the AP that the World Cup champion won't be allowed to train or play with the team and won't be paid during his suspension.

PSG had denied Messi's request to make the trip, the person said. Messi has a commercial contract with Saudi Arabia to promote tourism in the Middle Eastern country. The suspension comes at a

delicate time as the French club hopes to extend the Argentine star's contract beyond this season.

Messi's trip followed PSG's surprise 3-1 loss to Lorient on Sunday, leaving the defending champions with a five-point lead over Marseille with five games left in the season. Messi played the full game.

L'Equipe had reported that PSG coach Christophe Galtier pledged to give his players two days off Monday and Tuesday if they beat Lorient. Instead, the team trained on Monday



PSG's Lionel Messi, right, face Lorient's Bamo Meite during the French League One soccer match between Paris Saint-Germain and Lorient, at the Parc des Princes stadium in Paris, Sunday, April 30, 2023.

Associated Press

and had Tuesday off. The forward joined PSG from Barcelona two years

ago, and there has been speculation about where he would play next. □